

The Myth of a Free Press.

Our News Service Discussed by a Veteran Editor.--How the People are Doped with Made-to-Order News.

Wm. Marion Reedy, editor of the St. Louis Mirror, is, perhaps, one of the most forceful writers in the state. Being an Irishman he has that rugged honesty and inborn hatred of oppression so common among the sons of the Emerald Isle. At the Missouri Press Association, held at Excelsior Springs, May 28, Mr. Reedy read a paper entitled "The Myth of a Free Press." I am under obligations to J. B. Treinen, of St. Louis, for a copy of the Mirror containing this address. It occupies four pages of the Mirror, and I can, therefore, only give you sketches from it.

Mr. Reedy relates nothing that I did not already know--much of which I have told my readers. But he is a capitalist editor, and I want you to know what an honest man from that side of the house thinks of present conditions. As you read, bear in mind that Mr. Reedy was talking to an assemblage of newspaper men from all over the state, and that he would not likely say anything that could be refuted. Walter Williams, editor of the Columbia Herald, had just sat down. He had advocated a School of Journalism as a branch of learning to be taught at the Columbia State University. Mr. Reedy replied:

"I have listened carefully to Mr. Walter Williams' advocacy and prospectus of a school of journalism in connection with the State University. His idea has much to commend it, but after he has trained his pupils in economics, in politics, in sociology, he must still show them the main thing--how to 'get the money.' That is what the newspaper is here for, nowadays--the money. It were folly to attempt to disguise the fact. Teach the boys to write! Who ever sees an item in a newspaper well written? Time was when journalism had kinship with literature. Now the chief requisite in a reporter is legs. All he has to do is to get his misinformation as quickly as possible, shout it over a telephone to the office, where it is misunderstood, and then the facts are set up in a 'box,' topped by headlines and followed by loosely written slush."

"The prizes of journalism are not for those who can think soundly or write well. The man who writes has no chance to reach the real top-most power in journalism. He can only become an employee of some rich concern, writing not what he believes, but what his employers order him to think. What editor-to-day controls his paper?"

"I may state to you, what is well known to you all, that it is impossible, nowadays, to found a newspaper unless a man be a millionaire, or through a combination of capitalists, who hope to be millionaires when they grow big. In getting together a combination of capitalists in any large city it is impossible to escape including men who have chiefly acquired their wealth by investment in corporations based upon public franchises of one sort or another, and this being the case, we know it is only human nature that such men will insist upon the conduct of the newspaper in such way as to insure protection to their own interests. In the case of newspapers founded by men of small means in the past, and now attained unto greatness, we must remember that the founder in each instance has invested his money in exactly those enterprises that look for their success to the exploitation of the public. Thus, his interests become the special interests, and whether he will or no, in conducting his newspaper, he will have sympathy with all private interests similar to his own."

"It is for this reason that we find so many of our great newspapers tearing the air with their shrieks, and pawing up the air about minor evils, but remaining silent when fundamental wrongs are brought under intelligent fire. We find these newspapers very strong on the idea that we should have good men, but ever ready to attack the good man when he comes out in support of an idea, the tendency or purpose of which is to extract from the holders of privilege a share of the gains from these privileges which by right belongs to the community which, by its growth and activity, has made those privileges valuable. There are many great newspapers pretending to be friends of the people, but where is there one that does not, at the first faint symptom of an attack upon the source of corrupt wealth, with which its proprietor is in sympathy immediately falls back upon the so-called constitutional guarantees of property, and check progressive Democracy with the cry for conservatism?"

"To one who has lived all his life in cities, to one who has spent most

of his days and nights with the men who write the great daily papers of the cities, it is perfectly evident that ninety out of one hundred editorial writers on the press to-day are men who are in intellectual and sympathetic revolt against present day conditions. You will find the average editorial writer a socialist, and as for the reporter, he is most likely to be an anarchist. The reason of this is plain enough. The men who make the newspapers are behind the scenes--they see the workings of the wires--they note the demagoguery of politicians, they are familiar with the ramifications by which the public service corporations control the old parties down to the smallest offices, and even at times finance reform movements, which always stops at the election of some respectable figurehead or dummy, but never proceed to any attack upon the fundamental evils of our social and economic system. It is my firm belief that were it not for the capitalists at the head of our great daily newspapers, if it were possible for the men who write the news and the editorials of all the newspapers of the United States, to take absolute control of their publications and print the news exactly as they see it, and write their views exactly as they feel them, for a space of three days, there would be such a REVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AS WOULD PUT THAT OF FRANCE TO SHAME."

"To one on the inside of daily journalism it is laughable to observe how, with the decline of interest in the editorial, the daily newspaper, in order to accomplish its purpose of swaying the public, has had recourse to the doctoring of the news. There is not a great, powerful interest in the United States that is not, at the present time, maintaining a press bureau, the sole purpose of which is to get into the news columns of the papers articles so formed as to constitute effective arguments against all proposed interference with such interests. We have long been familiar with the actions of the book publishers in furnishing to the newspapers printed reviews of new books. We have all seen the excellent work of the theatrical press agent in generating an interest in the show or star which he represents. But it is not so generally known. Imagine, that all of the public service corporations of the country are cemented in one organization, which conducts a press bureau, and a very active one, that prepares articles, furnished free, against the agitation for municipal ownership of public utilities."

"Furthermore, when we look at the great newspapers, we observe another laughable feature in the manner in which they work upon the general public the most elaborate confidence game known in the history of America. We read in the editorial columns here and there the most violent denunciation and scathing derision of the wealthy and fashionable, but we turn to the news column and find this same newspaper catering slavishly, in gorgeous description and striking illustration, to all the basest vanity of the wealthy, and to the curiosity of the poor. We are told what the millionaire eats for breakfast, dinner and supper, whether he prefers nightshirts or pajamas. We see illustrated the stockings and lingerie of the golden brides of foreign noble adventurers, and we are treated to such a sickening celebration of wealth as is not to be found in any other country on the globe. To those of us who are, as we say, 'in the know,' this is a deliberate policy. The great newspapers play to the masses for circulation, and then turn around and coddle the classes for advertising."

"The course of the newspaper towards the Reformer is an interesting one. If a Reformer arises anywhere, if the people take to him, the press follows for a time--but only for a time. Take the case of Folk, in Missouri; La Follette, in Wisconsin; Heney, in San Francisco; Pingree, in Detroit; Golden Rule Jones, in Toledo; Tom L. Johnson, in Cleveland; Henry George, in New York. For awhile--so long as they are new to the public--the great daily press will exploit such men, but as soon as it becomes evident that the Reformer is sincere, that he really means to make war upon privilege, that he purposes to carry out his promises to the people--what do we find? Invariably, that the bigger press turns upon him unanimously, and if his position is economically sound and logical in character, and cannot be successfully assailed in rational argument, recourse is had at once to the weapons of abuse and ridicule."

"That these opinions of mine are not radical or rare, is subject to demonstration, and let any man

mix up to any extent with the men who write the newspapers of any great city, and he will come away from such association with a rather sickening sense of the great shame of journalism. He will find from the boys who write the news just how the news is perverted, and just what influences control and direct the perversion in the case of any individual newspaper."

"Naturally I will be asked, 'What is the remedy for all this?' I don't know that I have formulated one. I will say that I don't believe in the cry for more law on this, or any other subject. We have too much law already. I don't believe, either, in the autocratic powers of suppression being vested in the postoffice authorities. Of course, I do not believe in allowing fraudulent schemes to run riot until the people have all been skinned of their money before there can be a court of adjudication on the charge of fraudulent use of the mails. I don't believe in the suppression of papers for the expression of ideas."

"I am inclined to believe that the time is about here when we shall have to return to the days of the pamphlet, if we are to have any such thing as free utterance of heretical opinion, and heretical opinion in this country is always and everywhere nothing but the idea that this government has departed from its original principles, in that it has built up through privilege an oligarchy of wealth, and in doing so has necessarily done most outrageous violence to the principle of equal rights for all. There can be no privileges if there be not an expropriation of the rights of others, to the holder of the privilege. Every privilege is built upon an arrogation of the rights of some individual, or of the community at large. With the great newspapers closed to the man with the new ideas, there is no place for him to turn, except to the pamphlet. The liberties of England, of France, and of Germany, so far as they have liberties--and, indeed, in some respects they have more liberty than we have ourselves--were gained through the dissemination of ideas by the pamphlet; but for the pamphlet--there would have been no American Revolution, and no liberty for ourselves. With the great daily newspapers absolutely controlled by the men and interests whose sole desire is the perpetuation of the present status, with the great organs of public opinion openly fighting, or secretly betraying the popular movements for the return of this nation to the principle of Democracy, it would seem to be a matter of but a short time until it will be impossible for any man or set of men, devoted to a principle antagonistic to the wishes of our more and more consolidated aristocracy, to secure publicity of their ideas. This daily newspaper is gradually drifting into such a state of intellectual ossification under the influences of the restrictions put upon it by the wealth interests of the community in which it is published, that the eruption into one of their offices of a man with an idea is almost enough to create a panic and a call for the police. There is no longer an attempt made to speak honestly for the people. Every great subject is considered first in its relation to the existing private interests, and lastly in relation to its bearing upon the public welfare. The Sunday supplements and the comic section are unloaded upon a helpless people, apparently with no other purpose than to debauch their minds and prevent them from doing any serious thinking."

"But the case is not hopeless. Something can be done. My opinion is that the country editor can help, and help greatly. Let him study the daily paper in the light of such instances of a revelatory character as I have described here, and of many others which he can find out for himself by a little inquiry, and then, let him cease to follow the lead of the papers of the cities on public issues. Let him think for himself, and write his own opinions in a way to make his readers think."

Mr. Reedy speaks well and draws a picture that should set those to thinking that yet cherish the delusion that we have a free press. But in his remedy Mr. Reedy falls down--hard. He is not as familiar with country journalism as he is with city journalism and seems to imagine that the country editor can write his own opinions in a way to make his readers think."

Unfortunately the country editor--like the city editor--is just a "hired man"--or worse. The hired man gets a salary. The country editor gets what is left after paying rent, and interest on the mortgage.

It works like this: Promoters of schemes--industrial and political--buy a hand-full of type and a press. Some fellow who has learned to set a little type is installed as "editor." The promoters expect to make nothing out of the printing business. All they expect of it is that it boom their schemes, or candidates for office. All the "heavy" editorials are furnished by the owners of the plant in case the "editor" has not the ability to write them to their taste. In any event, the paper must always suit the men who hold the mortgage and must toot its horn in their interest, and about the only liberty allowed the "editor" is to say "Bill Jones was in town yesterday and renewed his subscription, for which he has our thanks. Mr. Jones is a prosperous farmer and wants to keep posted."

Another plan on which country newspapers are now organized is the corporation or stock company plan. The first of these in this section was organized at Kennett several years ago, and now one exists at nearly every county seat. The scheme is promoted by bankers, business and professional men, politicians and officials, and the objects are several. The first is to control public opinion and the politics of the county. The next is to rob tax-payers by unreasonable charges for county printing. The third is to suppress such news as may be damaging to the interests of the "best people," and to "play up" strong everything that can be distorted into a virtue--the doings of the "best people." The editors of such sheets are hired men and usually have considerable ability--and, for this reason, such sheets are more dangerous to the public welfare.

As for the press bureaus maintained by "the interests," the stuff is furnished to the country press as free as the city press. Most of the "heavy" stuff that appears in country papers is fresh from the factory.

HE'LL COME ALL RIGHT. Socialism is good Democracy, but they are trying to cover too many eggs for a pullet. They want to spread their party over the entire world, and the American people don't care a darn for any party outside the United States--Rolla Sharpshooter.

Now, Bro. Miller, you are mistaken about that. Don't you remember, in 1896, they told us that when you and I went out on a "globe trot," they would refuse to take our money in foreign lands if we adopted the 50-cent dollar! Course you do.

Seriously speaking, Bro. Miller is a Socialist and doesn't know it. He is an honest fellow--and strikes at corruption wherever it bobs up. He is one of the few country editors who controls the utterances of his paper. He is just where I was five years ago--gropping in the dark and hoping to reform the Democratic party.

If the party nominates a good man here and there, he plays the loud pedal on that man and feels that things are going his way. It never occurs to him that the good man is only a concession to such as he, and that the good man is placed on the ticket to pull the rotten lead through.

When Bro. Miller tires of "reforming the party" he'll come around to Socialism all right. The objection that Socialism extends over the entire world is no objection at all. Socialism is as broad as humanity--and humanity covers the world. Socialism comes to destroy capitalism, and it must therefore be as extensive as capitalism, which covers the world. If that is your only objection to Socialism, Bro. Miller, it is very weak.

The "respectable" people of Mexico will tell you that that is a free country and that there are no classes. Yet the peons of Mexico are more abject slaves than the chattel slaves ever were. They are not allowed to leave the estates to which they belong. Mexico is also a republic where "the people rule." Yet the corner-stone upon which slavery is built there is the same as here--DEBT. The children inherit the debts of their parents, and the LAW there compels the children to remain in servitude until the debt is extinguished. And the masters fix the wage scale! Labor unions are outlawed. We haven't quite reached that high state of "civilization" in this country, but we are drifting toward it at break-neck speed.

There will likely be something doing about election time. Say, farmers, what sense is there in uniting industrially and dividing politically! Think about it!

NEW PAPER TO START.

I think there is now no doubt that the new organ of capitalism is to appear here next month. Manning Phelan, a former Stoddard county newspaper man, is to lead the "Democratic" hosts of Scott county out of the wilderness. He was here at a meeting of the directors Saturday. My information is, of course, "caught on the fly." Everything is being done behind closed doors. As I get it, Cashier Johnson, of the Benton Bank, is president, and Collector Christman is secretary-treasurer of the new corporation. The other directors are B. F. Earles, the merchant prince of Morley; Chas. Stubbs, of the Stubbs-Marshall Mercantile Co.; Blodgett, and Tom Snowden, a Sandywoods farmer. The only other farmer who has come across, so far as I know, is Ed. Chewing. He, I believe, is the road boss of his district, while Tom has a good job as "viewer" of ditches. Anyways, both are good Democrats.

Half of the money subscribed was paid in Saturday. According to my information, which I consider pretty reliable--no stockholder has more than two shares, and most of them have only one. There are 100 shares at \$25 each. This means that there are 70 or 80 shareholders, composed of bankers, merchants, lawyers, politicians, office-holders, some priests, preachers, saloon-keepers and a few farmers who, occasionally, get a dry crumb from the court house pie counter.

The aim of this new scheme is to put the Kicker out of business. This paper is a thorn in the sides of those who "live by their wits." It must go at any cost. But, with the producing masses of the county behind it, I fear they will have the time of their lives. When the producers surrender the Kicker will--and not before. It is up to you, farmers and laborers of Scott county, and let your answer be an immediate increased circulation. If you have a neighbor who is not a subscriber, make one of him. Start a "Kicker army" in every school district--and fool the bosses.

Farmers, and especially tenant farmers, compare your conditions today with ten years ago. Then we heard of the "cussin' room" where some of you were periodically taken and abused for not having made better profits for your masters. The mortgage records described your stock, farm implements, household plunder and your growing crop. You had about as much liberty as a chained monkey and voted to please the bosses. Today you are not wearing diamonds, but you have a very strong union and I hear the bosses complain that they "dog-gone near have to take off their hats to you." Do you believe the Kicker had any thing to do with bringing about the change? If you don't, the master class does--and they are after Kicker with both feet.

I know that the sins of the Kicker are unpardonable. It has told you too much. Your vision has been so perverted that a landlord or bank president don't look much bigger than yourself. In fact, you are discrediting that time-honored yarn about "what is to my interest is to your interest also." It is an awful state of mind you are in--viewed from the standpoint of our "best people." These illusions must be corrected. And, for your sake, they are going to spend hundreds of dollars in an effort to get you to see as you used to.

The functionaries of capitalism have already donated liberally in your behalf--and will donate more. They will meet you with a smile and insist that you "take the paper." If you hang back, you will likely find them so deeply interested in YOUR welfare that they will pay for it for you. To get their dose into your home is the object. What they need, and must have, is circulation.

And right here is where you come in--strong. If you refuse to have anything to do with their dope sheet, their jig is up right now--the scheme as dead as a door nail. The patronage of the less than 100 stockholders will not support the paper. They NEED YOU--AND MUST HAVE YOU, OR QUIT. Even the merchant-stockholders would not advertise their wares in the paper if they could not reach you. YOU are IT, if you only knew it.

Will you bite? Will you prove to be a sucker and "take the cork under"? I hardly think so. There are now seven papers in the county controlled by the capitalists. The new paper will make eight. If they can keep the eight going, it seems to me that you ought to be able to support the one they do not control.

and, therefore want to destroy. Anyway, I'll chance it.

Get out and hustle. Let's fool 'em. Tell your neighbor about it. Get busy. If you are among those whose subscriptions expired this month, renew at once by sending a dollar bill at my risk, or a money order where the postmaster refuses the agency. A money order costs but three cents. Some of the postmasters of the county have joined the opposition and refuse to accept subscriptions for the Kicker. In such cases, when you have no dollar bill, get a money order and deduct the cost from the dollar. We'll get along somehow. To every subscriber who sends in a new one, I will send three pamphlets that will interest him. Wake up!

Let's have your answer

OPPORTUNITY LOST.

A discussion arose at the home of Charles Burrs, east of town, as to whether a little brass contraption he had found had anything in it or not. It turned out to be a dynamite cap and as Mr. Burrs was making his investigation, it exploded with a terrible result. Mr. Burrs lost a thumb and one finger. Mrs. Burrs was burned about the face and her eyes injured, and a child badly injured. We could not get further particulars but hope that all are getting along as nicely as possible--Sikeston Enterprise.

What a glorious opportunity was here lost to "discover a dastardly plot." There are many Socialists about Sikeston, and when dynamite explodes in a neighborhood infested by these wild-eyed creatures, it is out of the ordinary to tell the truth about it.

When this happened at Sikeston the telegraph wires should have been set to humming and the morning papers all over the country would have gleefully printed any sort of a "plot" that the imagination of Sikeston's best liars could have produced.

Since the opportunities are rare, none should be wasted.

Since threshing their wheat the farmers are feeling better. The yield was greater than was expected and the general crop of the county is put at about a half crop. In the low, wet lands the yield was very poor, but in favored land it yielded from 10 to 15 bushels per acre. Now the farmers are busy with cantaloupes, and the first shipments in carload lots were made from Morley Friday of last week. Watermelons are also beginning to move--the first wagon loads passing through Benton for Cape Girardeau last Friday.

Just before boarding a ship for Europe this week, Stuyvesant Fish reminded the workers that they had no room to complain because of the present depression. He said it was easier for a working man to out the living expenses of his family from \$15 to \$10 per week, than for men like him to out living expenses from \$200,000 to \$500,000 per year! Think of us fools supporting in idleness men whose living expenses exceed the salary of the president!

Read what Editor Reedy says about the "myth of a free press." He knows--and he tells us that there is no such thing as a free press in this country. He says that, to enlighten the people, we must return to the pamphlet. What Mr. Reedy has just discovered, the Socialists discovered years ago and circulate millions of pamphlets among the people annually. And the people are reading and studying them.

When the Mexican revolutionists flee to the United States for safety, the capitalist authorities of this "cradle of liberty" arrest and hold them for the Mexican authorities. But if the patriots can succeed in reaching Canada they are safe. Canada is not a "free" country. It is under the king of England. What a joke is our boasted "refuge of the oppressed."

PUBLIC SALE.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 1908.

At my farm, adjoining the north end of new Hamburg, I will sell three mules, two brood mares, four good milk cows--two with calves a Jersey cow, a yearling heifer, a Berkshire male, a brood sow and ten head of shoats, Milwaukee binder, Deering mower, three farm wagons, road wagon, Hoosier wheat drill, corn drill, fanning mill, section harrow, A harrow, two 3-horse plows, three 2-horse plows, two 1-horse plows, two double-shovel plows, harness and many other articles.

TERMS:--\$5.00 and under, cash; over \$5 a credit of six months will be given, purchaser giving 6% note with approved security. If promptly paid at maturity no interest will be charged. MRS. MARY GROJEAN.

IS IT TO BE A CAESAR?

Robert Hunter in the Chicago Daily Socialist.

We have had muckrakers exposing the political corruption of big business.

We have had investigating committees revealing the frenzied finance of big business.

We have had scientists exposing the adulteration of food by big business.

We have had stockholders' committees probing the affairs of big business to find their own agents looting the treasuries.

We have had electoral reform committees revealing big business paying the bills of infamous electoral crooks.

We have had governmental commissions printing volumes on mining disasters, railway wrecks--the murder of men, women and children for the profit of big business.

We have had tenement house commissions, child labor commissions, poor law commissions, unemployed commissions, all exposing the thousand cesspools that lie under the structure of big business.

Of all muck none is the equal of that muck which exists within the embrace of big business.

Yet all past exposures are nothing compared with those made during the recent Conference of Governors at the White House.

James J. Hill spoke of it as "a directors' meeting of the great political and economic corporation known as the United States of America, the stockholders of which are the eighty-seven millions of people."

Our hoarymose Jim then proceeded to tell us that OUR common heritage was being plundered, OUR forests turned into gold, OUR coal exhausted, OUR iron and other ores ripped from their beds, and OUR country generally pillaged and devastated.

He did not mention for whose profit.

But he warned us with tears in his eyes, to take thought for the future, when this country may be like a ruined city, sacked and abandoned by thieving invaders.

He tells us the time WILL come when some of the hungry, destitute, and half-crazed "stockholders" may rise in revolt. He fears that either civilization or liberty will perish, and that some Caesar or Napoleon MUST seize the reins of government with a strong hand or the republic will be FEARFULLY PLUNDERED AND LAID WASTE.

This is what Jim said. He said it before the President who is supposed to represent the stockholders. He said it before John Mitchell who was supposed to represent the stockholders. And they applauded Jim!

Now just consider one moment. One of the most powerful men in this country tells us that our country is being plundered and laid waste NOW by the few. He tells us that this robbery is producing millions of destitute, half-crazed people. And then he adds that when the present-day spoliation is complete there may be a terrible, bloody revolution.

When that time comes, Mr. Hill says, the few robbers will need some Caesar or Napoleon to protect them from the enraged people.

I am not surprised that Mr. Hill and his friends should be looking forward to a Caesar or Napoleon, but it does surprise one that Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Bryan and Mr. Mitchell should have listened to his words without protest.

Mr. Hill represents the few who plunder. We had supposed that Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Bryan and Mr. Mitchell represented the many who had been plundered.

Yet to these representatives of ours Mr. Hill says substantially: "This old Democracy, which has enabled us to steal everything in sight, should be relegated to the past. We need now a Caesar or a Napoleon to protect us from those whom we have robbed."

I can't understand such men as Frank McGuire. At first he wouldn't touch either Cowherd or Ball with a ten foot poll. But now that his "clean" men have been driven from the field he shouts for Ball. If Ball should drop out I guess he'd yell for Cowherd. In any event, if Cowherd gets the nomination Bro. Mc. will paw the air for this very "undesirable citizen." Of Tom Taggart's lawyer, who was nominated to second place on the Democratic national ticket, and of Mr. Bryan, he says: "They stand for the very best things in politics today." And yet Bryan stands today for none of the things that made him famous, and Kern is the attorney of a vice-joint to whom Taggart had twice given the Democratic nomination for governor of Indiana, and who twice brought up the rear when the ballots were counted.

You fellows who vote either the Democratic or Republican ticket have no right to complain at being robbed by organized greed. You vote to continue the existing robber system and get what you vote for. Shut up.